

Hidden Parts

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by [Beatricenius](#)

Summary

Will reaches across the table, taking Jed's hand on impulse. Jed looks down, and suddenly frowns. Will looks down too, realizing all too late his shirt sleeve has ridden up, far enough to bare the ring of bruises around his wrist.

"Will," Jed says, more cautious now, and Will hates it. "Are you sure everything is okay?"

Will has been dating an abusive man for three years when his ex boyfriend Jed suddenly shows up on his doorstep. Jed can instantly tell something isn't quite right.

Notes

This is more or less an AU based on my own AUs. It's pre-Hannibal canon and Will is dating Tom from my fic *After the Fall*, except this time Hannibal isn't the one who comes to the rescue. It's truly pure self indulgence and I've debated whether or not I should post it at all, but I figure it doesn't hurt :)

Will wakes up with a scream lodged in his throat, the scattered remains of his nightmare dissolving the moment his eyes fly open. He can't remember what scared him, what jumpstarted the frantic beat of his heart, even seconds from sleep. Still, he can take a guess.

At least once a week, he dreams about Tom breaking his arm. It's a recurring nightmare, stuck at the back of his mind since the day it happened. The fracture has healed, leaving not so much as a scar behind, but the memory remains fresh and gnarled, contorted like a wound healed wrong.

About a year ago, Will used to go out for drinks with a friend from work. It had been completely innocent; he had a girlfriend, and Will had no desire for them to be anything other than friends. His name was Joshua. Will knew he wasn't Joshua's best friend, but Joshua had been his only friend at the time, and he enjoyed drinking lukewarm beer in crowded cop bars with him. The normalcy it represented, going to work and going out afterwards, only to come home to his partner telling him dinner was in the oven.

It was the kind of life Will would never have thought possible. Mundane and ruled by habits, almost a little boring. The kind of life he had longed for with an almost fevered intensity as a kid.

He always knew Tom had a possessive streak. Even from the beginning, Tom had made no secret of wanting Will to himself. Will had worried he would disapprove when he started going out after work, and although a month or so passed without complaints, he finally brought it up one day when Will came home a little later than usual.

Tom said it hurt his feelings, the way he seemed to prefer someone else's company over his. He didn't like it when Will came home drunk, even though Will never had much to drink on those nights out, not nearly enough to render him drunk. When Will pointed that out, Tom shrugged.

"Fine. I guess I'm just a little jealous," he admitted, smiling, almost sheepish. "Can you blame me?"

Will supposed he couldn't. He did spend a lot of time with Joshua, and it was possible it wasn't quite fair. He went from going out twice a week to once a week, then he stopped going out altogether. He told himself it was because he didn't want to hurt Tom's feelings, not because of how Tom's jealousy had affected him in the past. He didn't want to think about yelling and fighting and Tom's blunt nails digging into his arms as he shook him, pushing him away with thinly veiled disgust on his face.

He tried to erase the memory of being slapped in the face for talking to someone in a bar altogether. Tom had been drunk, just like Will. They were fine. Will cared about him, so he would do his best to be a good partner for him. It was as simple as that.

A few weeks after Will stopped going out for drinks, Joshua invited Will to his birthday party along with a few other coworkers. Will had figured he wouldn't even bother to invite him now that they'd more or less stopped talking, but he found he really wanted to go. He thought

it would be fine, since it wasn't just Joshua this time. He texted Tom while he was still at work and came home after midnight, not expecting Tom to still be up.

The fight they got into was worse than any they'd ever had. It ended with Tom twisting Will's arm around his back, keeping it bent at an unnatural angle until it snapped with a dry, hollow sound Will would never forget, like twigs breaking underfoot. Will was still teary-eyed from the pain when Tom rushed him to the ER.

They didn't talk about it once they were back home again, and Will stopped trying to make friends at work. Or anywhere, for that matter. Tom was acting like it never happened, and Will found it oddly relieving.

Tom was and continues to be a good partner, most of the time. He remembers birthdays and anniversaries, offers emotional support when Will needs it and likes to surprise him with his favorite food for no particular reason. Sometimes, Will even feels like an inferior partner, afraid he isn't trying hard enough to be the kind of person Tom deserves.

Still, he will never forget the way Tom kept pulling his arm back. No hesitation, not even when Will was screaming and begging him to stop. The twig snap sound of bones breaking is stuck on repeat in his mind, revisiting him in his dreams.

*

It's late afternoon on one of Will's days off when he gets an unexpected visit. He's sitting alone by the kitchen table with a cup of coffee, hearing the crunch of gravel outside and a car door slamming shut. At first, he thinks Tom is home early, but then there's a knock on the door. Tom would never knock.

The dogs mill around him as Will walks up to the door and opens it. He can't help but blink against the sight that greets him. On the porch is a man with long, blonde hair and a denim jacket, grinning from ear to ear.

"Jed?" Will says, smiling at his ex-boyfriend, looking almost exactly the same as he did when he last saw him. "Is that really you?"

"It's me, alright," Jed says, practically beaming. "Hey, Willy. I was in the neighborhood, believe it or not. May I come in?"

"Of course," Will says. He realizes he's only wearing a T-shirt with his pants and quickly snatches up a flannel from the back of a chair. His wrists are bruised, though nothing had truly happened; he'd gotten them when Tom pinned his wrists above his head the night before. Consensually. He even asked if Will was sure it was okay and Will promised it was. He just doesn't want Jed to get the wrong idea, to think it's something it isn't.

"Sorry to barge in like this," Jed says, apologetically. "I had business in Oakton, then I remembered you said you lived around here. Still got your address saved in my phone. Though I wasn't sure if you might've moved."

"I try to avoid it if I can," Will says. "Dad moved me around enough. Want some coffee?"

Jed smiles, taking a seat by the kitchen table. "Please."

Will glances up to the clock on the wall. It's two hours until Tom gets off work. He usually isn't home until seven or eight no matter when his shift ends, but Will is never quite sure when he'll be back. He tries not to worry about it, pouring Jed a cup of coffee and handing it over to him instead.

"So, what have you been up to lately?" Will asks, leaning back against the counter. "It must've been years since we last talked."

Will moved from Biloxi when he was young, but they've always had each other's phone numbers, occasionally texting or even talking on the phone. Will stopped answering his texts around the time he and Tom started dating, and they haven't talked since then.

"That long, huh?" Jed says, scratching his chin. "You know how it is, same old. And you?"

"I'm in homicide now," Will says, and can't help the swell of pride in his chest he feels every time he gets to mention it. Jed gives a wide grin.

"Just like you always wanted."

"Yeah," Will says. He pauses for a moment. "I'm with someone. His name is Tom. We've been together three years now."

Jed smiles again, wide and delighted. "That's great news. Can I meet him?"

"I think he'll be home late, honestly."

"That's a shame."

Will makes the short walk to his nightstand and takes a framed picture off of it, giving it to Jed. "That's him, right there."

Will genuinely loves that picture of him and Tom. Tom had taken it when they were out fishing one day, and they look happy, carefree, the sun so bright in their faces it whites them out, smoothing out their features. Will often looks at that picture before falling asleep, wishing he could live that day every day.

"Handsome," Jed says with approval in his voice. "The guy next to you looks alright too."

Will laughs and Jed smirks, a mischievous grin dimpling his cheeks. It's so easy to talk to him, Will thinks. He'd forgotten how nice it is just being near him. They sit around the kitchen table and talk until an hour passes, then another half hour. By then, it's getting darker outside, and Will remembers himself.

"Jed, don't you need to head back home soon?"

"Oh, I'm not in a rush. Would feel bad leaving you here all alone too, if your boyfriend isn't coming home yet."

“Really, that’s no problem,” Will says, trying to figure out how to politely get him out of the house. “I need to clean up around here anyway. Tom isn’t a big fan of clutter.”

“I’m sure he’ll understand when you tell him an old friend stopped by,” Jed says. Will bites the inside of his cheek, anxious and thoughtful, and Jed gives him a searching look. “Is everything alright?”

“Yeah, of course. Why?”

“I don’t know.” Jed looks unsure. “Do you want me out of here?”

“No, Jed, of course not.” Will reaches across the table, taking Jed’s hand on impulse. Jed looks down, and suddenly frowns. Will looks down too, realizing all too late his shirt sleeve has ridden up, far enough to bare the ring of bruises around his wrist.

“Will,” Jed says, more cautious now, and Will hates it. “Are you sure everything is okay?”

“Yeah,” Will says. “Yeah, I’m fine.”

Will tries to take his hand away, but Jed tightens his grip, pulling his shirt sleeve up even further with his other hand. Will closes his eyes, feeling embarrassment crash over him in great waves.

“Will, what are these?”

“It’s nothing,” Will says, trying his best to laugh it off, to sound anything but insistent.

“Come on. You remember I, uh—like it kind of rough.”

“Why do you need me to leave though?” Jed gives him an urgent look. “You can be honest with me. Please, Will.”

“Like I said, it’s nothing.” Will yanks his hand back, pulling both sleeves down. “You don’t have to worry about me, Jed.”

“So if I stay until your boyfriend comes home, that’s not a problem?”

Will falls quiet, resisting a sigh. He thinks about his broken arm, having to lie about it for weeks. Being stuck behind a desk for two months until it healed, then being forced to go to physical therapy to be cleared for the field.

He doesn’t know what to say. He’s never talked about this with anyone, or even entertained the idea. Jed seems to be putting two and two together anyway, because his frown isn’t budging from his face.

“This guy is hurting you?” he asks. “Will, that’s unacceptable.”

“Look, it’s not what it seems like,” Will says, feeling defensive without quite knowing why. “It’s easy for you to say he’s all bad, but he’s not.”

Will looks down into his lap. He can't put what he wants to say into words, it's too much, too many complicated circumstances and emotions at once.

"Without Tom, I'm all alone," he finally settles for, and ignores the hot flush of shame in his face.

"Isn't alone better than this?" Jed says. He seeks Will's gaze, tipping his head until their eyes lock. "Either way, you're not alone. You have me."

Will scoffs. "You don't even live here."

"I can still be there for you. On the phone, if you need it." Jed takes his hand again. It's so warm, big enough that it almost makes Will's hand disappear when he holds it. "I promise you that, Will. You can't stay like this. Does he own the house?"

"It's mine. It doesn't matter. He'll never leave anyway." Will looks up, suddenly feeling a flare of panic inside. "Jed, I don't want him to."

"Listen," Jed says, "you don't have to make any decisions today. But please, don't cut me off again."

Will shakes his head. "You don't get it."

"I don't get what?"

"I can't talk to you. Tom would hate it."

"He doesn't have to know, does he?" Jed says. "Listen. I'm going to text you every day when you're at work. I can even call, if you'd like. If you need anything, I'll do my best."

It's more than what Will could have asked for, even if he had thought to do so. He looks up and isn't sure what is showing on his face, but it makes Jed smile softly. "You're not alone, sweetheart," he says and pats Will's hand. "I'll leave now, if you need me to. But we'll keep in touch, right?"

"Right," Will echoes. And they do.

*

Will can't say exactly what he's afraid of when it comes to Tom leaving. Or leaving Tom. It mostly boils down to what he told Jed: he would be alone, and he's not sure he can be anymore. He had gotten used to it before they met, spent his childhood and most of his adolescence like a ghost, unnoticed or unwanted, but looking back, he can't believe that used to be his life.

He can't imagine coming home to an empty house, knowing it will stay empty. He can't imagine only having the dogs for company, as much as he appreciates them. He has always had trouble sleeping, but since he started working homicide, it's been worse than ever. Tossing and turning in an empty bed is unimaginable.

Finding a new partner seems equally impossible. Meeting Tom had been a fluke, a drunken hook-up turned into a relationship; a frog to a prince to a big, bad wolf. Will doesn't date, never even attempted it before, and feels like he couldn't possibly try it now. He's in his thirties and the only real relationship he's ever had is the one he has with Tom.

At least he doesn't think his relationship with Jed counts. He had been sixteen at the time, just a kid, and Jed had called them old friends when he came to visit. Maybe they never truly had a relationship to begin with and it was all in Will's head, cobbled together from awkward teenage fumbblings and daydreams.

"Of course you'll find someone else," Jed tells him on the phone when Will reluctantly brings it up. "Are you kidding?"

"I don't know," Will says and glares into his cooling cup of coffee. "Tom keeps saying no one else would put up with me. I know he's just feeding my insecurities, trying to keep me from leaving. He's still right."

"The hell he is."

"You don't know who I am today," Will says. "You just knew me when we were kids."

"Will, I know there's nothing wrong with you," Jed says, firmly. "Nothing at all. You think there is, but there isn't."

"How do you know?"

"I know because of Grim. Remember him?"

A small smile tugs on Will's lips. "Of course I remember him."

"Yeah, you would. I think about that mean old dog every time I hear a kid scream. I'll never forget the look on my daddy's face when you said he was just scared, that he only snapped at the neighborhood kids because he was anxious." Jed laughs. "Didn't look anxious to me. But you tried so hard with him, feeding him every day, talking to him. So cautious and patient, until he finally let you pet him. Then he was following you around everywhere like any old lap dog."

Will smiles, thinking about the silky, black fur of the rottweiler's back, slick-looking like an oil spill when the sun hit. He had never known a more loyal dog.

"That's a good person, Will," Jed says. "You'll never change my mind about that."

Will ponders for a moment. "Maybe Tom is like Grim," he says.

"No," Jed says immediately, "that man is a whole other kind of beast."

*

Tom finds out Will has been talking to Jed when he searches Will's phone. Will doesn't keep him listed as a contact and has made a habit of deleting every single text from him before

coming home from work, but he can't delete their calls. There's a few of them at this point, intermingled with work calls.

It doesn't help to say it's a coworker. It doesn't help to promise him it's nothing. Tom has a white-knuckled grip on his phone and smacks Will across the face with it, landing a blow much more serious than the slap Will had gotten that one time. It hurts so much Will barely dares to move the first few seconds, and then there's warm wetness gathering in his mouth. He lifts his hand to his mouth and touches it gingerly, coming away with red-stained fingers.

Blood. Pooling in his mouth and running lazily down his chin. He hears himself telling Tom he's sorry, though he mostly feels a sense of numb dread. It's like he isn't in his own body anymore.

"Tell me who it is," Tom demands, and Will says nothing, because he isn't sure what to tell him. Tom throws his phone at him, hitting him in the shoulder before it bounces off of him and down to the floor, screen cracking against the floorboards. "*Tell me*," Tom yells, "you cheating fucking *shut*."

"It's just a friend," Will says, suddenly realizing he's shielding his face with his arms. He doesn't lower them. "I swear."

"Maybe I should give them a call and check, then." Tom snatches the phone from the floor, and Will feels a twinge of useless hope. As though Jed could do anything all the way from Biloxi. He watches Tom make the call, hearing his own pulse in the sudden silence of the room.

Will can't quite hear what's happening on the other end of the line, but he can make out the muffled sound of Jed's voice when he picks up. Tom clears his throat.

"This is Thomas, Will's partner," he says. "Who's this?"

"Tom, that's enough," Will says, feeling like he's suddenly been snapped back into reality, reunited with himself. "You don't have to—"

"Jed, huh?" Tom interrupts, taking the phone from his ear to his speaker. He looks at Will expectantly. "I hope you don't mind me asking, but I couldn't help but notice you've been calling Will a lot. Anything you want to tell me about?"

"I'm sorry, did Will let you use his phone for this?" Jed asks.

"Answer the question."

"I think you ought to simmer down, Thomas. Will and I are old friends, so we've been talking on the phone. Like friends do."

"See?" Will says. "Like I said—"

"Shut up," Tom hisses, and Will flinches from it.

"Did you just tell him to shut up?" Jed asks, sounding baffled. "Look—"

“No, *you* look, you redneck bastard. I don’t care what you claim your relationship is. You don’t talk to him anymore or I’ll make sure you regret it.”

“Tom,” Will says, taking a cautious step closer. “Please, don’t—”

“I told you to *shut up*,” Tom says and backhands Will across the face, where it still hurts from the previous blow. Will’s teeth clamp down on his tongue and tears rise in his eyes, mouth filling with a fresh burst of iron-tasting blood.

“Will?” Jed says on the phone, sounding alarmed now. “Will, what’s going on? Are you okay?”

Will can’t help it. Tears start running down his face, not just because he’s in pain, but because the situation is so hopeless. His face feels hot. He’s embarrassed, even though he knows he hasn’t done anything wrong. Everything is still his fault. These realizations are simultaneous.

“Will,” Jed calls again, voice gaining a desperate edge. Tom rolls his eyes.

“M’fine,” Will says, even though he knows it’s stupid. What else can he say? His face is throbbing, his pulse pounding behind his eyes. His words keep coming out slurred and rough, like he’s drunk. “Sorry, Jed.”

“Don’t call here again,” Tom growls into the phone. Then he ends the call and lets the phone drop to the floor, almost flippantly, making Will cringe. For a moment, he’s afraid of facing more of Tom’s anger, but it seems the fight has gone out of him. He simply walks over to an armchair and drops his full weight into it, sighing wearily while Will stands frozen in place.

“What’re you looking at?” he snaps.

Will says nothing and ducks his head, turning to walk out of the room. Tom doesn’t come after him, letting Will lock himself in the bathroom. Even with a locked door between them, he’s still a little bit scared. It lingers like a bad taste. The frantic beat of his heart refuses to slow.

The harsh, florescent light of the bathroom is unforgiving. Will’s reflection in the mirror seems monstrous to him. Blood and tears and purple-red swelling, like something is growing beneath his skin, waiting to burst out of him.

He cleans up as much as possible and avoids looking in the mirror on the way back out.

(Later that night, Tom kisses him and tells him he’s sorry, that he overreacted, that he just cares about him so much. His kisses hurt where Will’s lip has swelled, but he still wants them, wants every scrap of kindness Tom can offer somehow, despite everything.)

*

The next day, there’s a knock on the door. It’s lunchtime, and Will is home alone. He couldn’t go to work with the way he looked, face bruised and eyes red-rimmed and puffy. The sudden noise makes him jump, and he considers not opening the door, but when he looks out the window he sees a familiar pickup truck parked in the driveway. He quickly makes his way to

the front door, tearing it open only to find Jed standing there, looking tired and anxious. His face changes when he sees Will, almost visibly paling.

“Jesus Christ, Willy.” He walks closer, taking Will’s face gently between his hands. His touch feels good; Will fights the urge to close his eyes. “I am going to kill that man.”

“No, you’re not,” Will mutters. “What are you doing here, Jed? It’s not even two in the afternoon, you must’ve been driving all night.”

“Sure did,” Jed says. “We’re getting out of here. No buts; we can argue on the way there.”

“What?” Will frowns. “The way *where*?”

“A motel room.” Jed says. “I’ve got my cousins taking over on the ranch for a while.”

“Jed—”

“Listen, I know you don’t feel ready,” Jed says, “and I know this may be the wrong thing of me to do. But I couldn’t live with myself if I didn’t at least try. I’m sticking by your side in case he tries anything. We’ll work out how to fix this someplace safe.”

Will is stunned. “But—”

“I said, no buts.”

“I haven’t prepared anything. I don’t know what to bring.” Will stops, blood suddenly running cold. “What if I regret it? What if I want him back and he won’t have me?”

“You won’t want him back,” Jed says, kindly. “You need some distance, and someone there to support you. It’ll be like withdrawal, right? Worst in the beginning.”

Will wants to go. But he also doesn’t. He takes a step back, shaking his head. He’s tired and still a little bit scared and seeing Jed is as comforting as it is uncomfortable. It reminds him of who he used to be, or maybe who he could have been. A version of himself without shades of purple blooming across his skin. How did he end up like this?

“Come on, Will. I promise you, it’ll be fine,” Jed says. “Don’t worry too much about packing. Just take what you need, bring the dogs and I’ll get us out of here.”

Tom would be furious to find the dogs missing. There are two of them, Nell and Jackie, both of which Will rescued off the streets. Tom spends almost as much time with them as Will does though, there’s no way he would have been able to keep them if Tom weren’t fond of them as well.

In the end, Jed makes the decision for him. He searches the room until he finds leashes and attaches them to Nell and Jackie respectively, bribing them with treats to make them follow him into the truck. Will packs an overnight bag in a daze, finally grabbing the picture of himself and Tom off the nightstand and stuffing it into the side of the bag, not thinking too hard about why. Then he’s in the truck, and Jed is pulling out of the driveway.

“I swear you won’t regret this,” Jed says.

Will watches his house disappear in the distance. “I feel like I’m ruining my life.”

“He ruined it for you. It’ll get better now, Willy. The longer you’d have stayed with him, the worse it would’ve gotten.”

Will says nothing. He thinks about his house, of all things; he’d bought it in his twenties, before he and Tom met, seeing a solitary but pleasant life for himself there. The idea of parting with it is unexpectedly painful.

“I’ll never get him out of my house,” he says.

“You will, because it’s yours. Right? We’ll call the cops on him, if necessary.”

“I don’t want to cause a scene.”

“The one causing a scene would be him.” Jed pats him on the thigh. “One step at a time, Will.”

*

Around eight, Will gets the first call. He can’t bring himself to pick up the phone, and it keeps ringing until Jed finally answers it with Will’s permission.

“Will is breaking up with you,” he says. “Sorry, bud.”

He ends the call. The phone starts up again immediately, and he puts it on silent mode, facing down. Will forces himself not to look, letting Jed distract him with snacks from a vending machine and a detective novel, a paperback that looks like something Will would have read as a kid. It looks brand new, like Jed bought it on the way to his house. He doesn’t ask if he did.

When it’s nearly eleven, Will finally flips his phone over and finds too many texts to count, and at least as many calls. He calls back, expecting Tom’s explosive anger on the other end of the line, but he sounds unusually subdued when he picks up. His voice is thick, like he’s been crying.

“Will?” is all he says at first.

“It’s me.”

Tom releases a shaky breath. “I’m so sorry. Please, tell me what I can do.”

Will swallows. Nell jumps up on the bed and places her head in Will’s lap, and Will scratches her behind the ear on reflex. It’s soothing, and he releases a shallow breath.

“There’s nothing you can do,” he says, trying not to let the wet, thick desperation in Tom’s voice get to him. “I know you know what you’ve been doing to me. You know there’s

nothing to justify resorting to violence. We never talk about it, but it doesn't mean it never happened."

"Look, I made a mistake," Tom says. "I'll admit as much, and I'm sorry, okay? But—"

"No," Will says, some anger finally trickling into the heartache. "Not one mistake. You broke my arm, Tom. I still have nightmares about it. I couldn't work for two months and I had to lie every time people asked about it. While you didn't even acknowledge it'd happened."

"Will—"

"I can't do this anymore," Will interrupts. "I'm leaving you. I want you out of my house. You can take some time to pack up your things, but I need you gone."

"I can't believe you," Tom says, baffled. "You really were a lying cunt the whole time. What do you—"

Will ends the call. The screen is still cracked, slightly distorting the display. It's a reminder as good as any, and in that moment, he feels a surprising sense of calm.

"You're doing great, Will," Jed says.

"It felt easy." Will tears his gaze away from his phone. "I should have tried it sooner."

"Doing things like this alone is hard." Jed moves from his bed to Will's, sitting down next to him. "Cut yourself some slack."

"I'm weak." Will falls back on the bed, closing his eyes. "I never fought back. Not once. I have combat training." He pauses. "When he broke my arm, I think I was just hoping he would stop. I realized too late he wouldn't. When I finally started struggling, it hurt me more than him."

Will curls up, burying the uninjured side of his face in his pillow. He feels Jed moving behind him, settling down on his side with an arm tentatively wrapped around Will's waist. He isn't close enough for their bodies to touch, so Will scoots closer, letting himself be held. He has gone to sleep like this with Tom many times over the past three years, but it's different with Jed. His broad chest and almost comically large hands make him feel small, but not in a bad way. It feels like shelter.

"You're not weak," Jed says. "You've been strong for a long time."

"Will you sleep here tonight?" Will asks. "It's fine if you don't want to."

"I'll stay."

"Thanks." Will reaches over to turn off the lights. He's suddenly more tired than he can remember being in a long time, and he hopes that means he'll get a decent night of sleep.

"Goodnight, Jed."

"Goodnight, Will."

He falls asleep to the sound of Jed's slow, even breathing, brushing against his cheek like a mild breeze.

*

In the morning, they head to the reception desk with Nell and Jackie in tow to ask where they can find a place to get breakfast. The receptionist tells them about a diner, then mentions a man showing up asking for someone by the name of Will Graham. When she said no one by that name had checked in, he'd asked for a Jed.

"What did you tell him?" Will asks. The receptionist – a young woman, no older than eighteen, Will would guess – looks unsure. Her gaze flits over Will's bruised face and concern replaces the confusion on her face.

"I said he was renting a room," she admits. "But I didn't tell him which one. I'm not at liberty to disclose that information." It sounds rehearsed. Will nods, feeling a quiet sense of dread settling in his stomach.

"He left hours ago," she says. "I told him he couldn't stay here if he wasn't going to rent a room."

Will nods again. "Thanks for letting me know," he says and heads towards the door with Jed and the dogs. There aren't many motels in this area, but still, Tom must have checked them all until he found them here. It's a disconcerting thought.

Once they're back in the small parking lot, Will realizes the receptionist had been wrong about Tom leaving. A familiar car is parked there, and before he can even tell Jed about it, Tom opens the door. He slams it shut, marching up to them with a dangerous glint in his eyes. He looks absolutely furious, an anger so palpable it's radiating off of him.

"Are you seriously leaving me for him?" Tom asks, pointing towards Jed.

"I'm not leaving you for anyone," Will says. "You shouldn't have come here."

"We're going home." Tom grabs him. The moment his fingers close around his forearm, Will realizes he truly doesn't want to go. He twists free, and Tom grabs the front of his shirt, trying to physically drag him towards the car. Will grabs him by the hand and elbow and twists him off, like he learned in training, and Tom stumbles back. He looks livid, staring at Will like a wild thing. He takes a step closer again, and Jed steps between them.

"You got a lot of nerve," he tells Tom, sounding cold in a way Will's can't remember hearing before. "Don't touch him."

"Don't touch him?" Tom repeats, disbelieving. "Who the fuck do you think you are?"

Tom balls his hand into a fist and hits Jed in the jaw. Jed is off balance only for a split second before he reaches out and grabs Tom by the hair, bringing his knee up into his stomach, hard. Will hears Tom lose his breath before he hits the ground, sputtering and wheezing. The dogs start barking, and Will quiets them.

It's an odd sight, Tom on the ground with his breath knocked out of him. Something in Will wants to keep watching, wants to make it worse, somehow. A part of him wishes there were blood. That part is what finally makes him avert his gaze, whistling for his dogs to follow him to the truck. They get into the backseat and Will pets them both, making sure to tell them they're being good girls.

Once Jed gets into the driver's seat, Will takes a proper look at his face. He can't see any blood, no notable swelling or bruising. Not yet, anyway.

"You okay?" he asks.

"Yeah," Jed mutters. "I dodged at the same time he was hitting me. How're you feeling, Will?"

"I'm fine." He will be, anyway. He feels more certain of it with every passing moment. "I'm sorry I—dragged you into this."

"I'd argue I dragged *you* into this." Jed looks vaguely amused. He pulls out of the driveway, heading in the direction of the diner the receptionist recommended. "It's worth it, Willy. Truly."

Will looks out the window. The world is empty here, nothing but road and sky and the occasional gas station. It doesn't feel quite real.

"Do you ever think about what it would've been like if I hadn't moved?" He glances to Jed, whose eyes are fixed on the road. He remains quiet for a beat too long, and Will shakes his head. "Sorry. Forget I said anything."

"Of course I think about it," Jed says, glancing over at him. "I did come to visit you for a reason." He bites his lip. "I didn't mean it like that. It's not like I expected anything, but—you know what I mean, right?"

"Pull over."

"Why?"

"Just pull over."

Jed does, parking them in the middle of nowhere as soon as he can. Will unbuckles his seat belt and gets out of his seat, awkwardly making his way into Jed's lap, legs on either side of his thighs. He did this once when they were kids, when he was nothing but skin and bones and his growth spurt had yet to kick in. He had fit much more easily then, but he felt as awkward as he feels now.

"Will," Jed says, voice soft, slightly reprimanding. "What is this?"

"You need me to explain that to you?"

"I don't think this is such a good idea."

Will shifts, deliberately brushing up against the slight hardness between Jed's thighs. A little thrill surges through him, and he does it again, breath catching as he feels himself growing hard as well.

"Don't try to tell me what I want, Jed."

Jed smiles and puts his hands on Will's hips, pressing him closer. "Then tell me what you want."

Will smiles back and lets his lips brush against Jed's, letting out a small noise as his face is framed by warm, large hands. It still hurts where Tom hit him, but it's worth it; feeling the tickle of Jed's beard on sensitive skin, his warm tongue sliding wet along the seam of his mouth.

Will fumbles with his belt, then Jed's, spitting in his hand. He spreads the slick mess as much as he can over the both of them and gasps as he finally manages to get his hand around both their cocks.

"Fuck," Jed mumbles, leaning his head back. He's so beautiful, with his messy, straw-colored hair and golden skin, mouth trembling ever so slightly as Will rubs his thumb over the tip of his cock. He spits in his hand again, making everything slicker, and it's so good he can't help but moan. He can't remember being this hard in a long time, can barely recall a pleasure so intense it seems to skitter up and down his spine the way this does.

They both thrust up into Will's grip, desperate and eager, and Jed slides his hands beneath Will's shirt, pulling it up over his chest.

"Yes, God, please," Will says, remembering what they used to do when they were younger, messing around in the backseat of a truck much like this. He catches a glimpse of Jed's Cheshire cat smile before he leans in and licks Will's nipple, sucking it into his mouth with a pleased sound. His hand find Will's other nipple, rolling it between his fingers until it hardens, and it makes Will's hips stutter, losing their rhythm.

"Missed these," Jed says, and Will can't help a shaky laugh.

"You're so weird."

"You like it."

"Uh-huh." Will moans. "Sorry, I—I'm not going to last long."

"Me neither." Jed nuzzles his chest with the tip of his nose. "Go ahead, babe."

Will thrusts up a final time, feeling his eyes roll back in his head as he comes. Wet warmth slides down his hand and there are streaks of pearly white across his stomach, quickly cooling into a sticky mess. Jed comes soon after, adding to the mess with a moan loud enough to startle the dogs in the backseat.

Will leans his forehead against Jed's shoulder, breath leaving him on a long exhale.

“That was really good.”

“It was,” Jed agrees. He puts his arm around Will’s waist, adjusting him on his lap. “Feels like I could fall asleep. We should have gone back to the motel room.”

“I wouldn’t change a thing.” Will nuzzles the side of Jed’s neck, burying his nose in the collar of his jacket. It smells like smoke and animals, a comforting, familiar scent. “Let’s go get breakfast.”

“Whatever you say, sugar.”

Will climbs out of Jed’s lap and tries to clean up as much as possible. Jed does the same, and they both laugh when their eyes meet. They’re both flushed and messy-haired with suspicious stains all over, come drying in flakes on Will’s hand.

“We should find a drive in,” Will says.

“Probably,” Jed agrees. “That’s fine. We’ve all the time in the world.”

Will’s smile broadens as he realizes it’s true.

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